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S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 04 SANAA 002055

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FOR PM A/S BLOOMFIELD

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TAGS: [PARM](#) [MASS](#) [PREL](#) [ASEC](#) [PTER](#) [YM](#) [OVID](#) [COUNTER](#) [TERRORISM](#)
SUBJECT: SCENESETTER FOR VISIT OF A/S BLOOMFIELD TO YEMEN

REF: STATE 180556

Classified By: Ambassador Thomas C. Krajeski; reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

¶11. (C) Embassy Sana'a warmly welcomes the visit of PM Assistant Secretary Bloomfield to Yemen. You will find President Saleh and senior ROYG officials ready to discuss the proposed USG buy-back and destruction assistance for illicit Yemeni MANPADS. The ROYG wants this program, and they want to keep it running. Be prepared for the ROYG to seek extending the buy-back to cover other weapons systems. Although your primary goal is ROYG buy-in and cooperation in this limited buy-back, the timing is right to push for greater SA/LW inventory controls and a rational ROYG acquisition policy. Should you arrive with C-130 licensing agreements in your pocket it will buy good-will by removing a long-standing irritant in U.S. - Yemeni military cooperation.

¶12. (C) You can expect at least initial ROYG resistance to sharing a serialized inventory of their official MANPADS stock, as well as to any appearance of outside interference in their acquisitions policy. The ROYG has asked that we keep the U.S. role in providing technical and financial assistance for MANPADS recovery and destruction secret -- citing potential backlash from the tribes, price gouging by the merchants, and opposition from the street. Although the fact of your visit will be public, we should not publicize its main purpose.

President Saleh

¶13. (C) In the last two years, President Ali Abdullah Saleh transformed Yemen's domestic security picture with major counter-terrorism achievements: the 11/02 apprehension of al-Qa'ida HVT Abu-Assem al-Mekki, aggressive CT operations against the Aden-Abyan Islamic Army, and the 9/03 round-up of an emerging al-Qa'ida cell with plans to target the U.S. Ambassador and other American and Western interests.

¶14. (C) Saleh's modus operendi vis-a-vis CT cooperation is to leverage these successes into further U.S. military and security cooperation, intelligence support, development assistance and food aid. Saleh has determined that his interests lie in his pro -U.S stance in the GWOT. The MANPADS buy-back is part of our continuing CT partnership, as well as an opportunity to build on the relationships established by his visit to Sea Island and participation in the G-8 Summit.

¶15. (S) Saleh is now embroiled in an armed-struggle against the supporters of rebel Shi'ite cleric al-Houthi in the northern Sa'da region. His difficulty in quelling the conflict, and his reported fury at discovering the insurgents are better armed with more advanced weapons than ROYG forces, may lead to a realization that the traditional arms-loving Yemeni culture, if unchecked, can seriously threaten regime interests. However, while such thinking aids our push for greater controls over the flow of illicit SA/LW in and out of Yemen, it also feeds the ROYG hunger for acquiring new more advanced weapons for its own arsenal. (Note: Saleh has requested Embassy assistance both for vehicular and airborne countermeasures to defeat SAMs. End Note.)

Notional Schedule

¶16. (C) We have not scheduled meetings outside the Embassy for August 30. On August 31 you will meet with President Saleh, Deputy Director of the National Security Bureau Ammar Saleh (in charge of illicit weapons recovery in Yemen), Minister of Defense Abdullah Ali Alaiwa, and Minister of Interior Rashad al-Alimi. The Presidential Palace will likely inform us on the timing of your meeting with Saleh shortly before it occurs, and your subsequent meetings will follow. A working lunch with key players is expected to take place at one of the Ministries. The Ambassador would like to host a small dinner at his residence on August 31 or September 1 with Ministers of Defense, Interior, Foreign Affairs, NSB Deputy Ammar Saleh, and Dr. Iryani. We are waiting for ROYG response to the invitation. We have requested to tour MANPADS storage sites on September 1, and

it may be possible for you to visit a weapons souk outside of Sana'a, pending resolution of security and logistical issues.

Ammar Saleh and the National Security Bureau

¶17. (C) In response to the Secretary's letter, President Saleh tapped his nephew, Deputy Director of the National Security Bureau (NSB) Ammar Saleh, as the ROYG lead for MANPADS buy-back (Note: Ammar Saleh's lead was confirmed to Charge by Foreign Minister al-Qirbi and Defense Minister Alaiwa. End Note.) Ammar Saleh is expected to take the reins as NSB Director soon. He will have his work cut out for him wrestling NSB's new portfolio from the other security organizations, chiefly the Political Security Organization (PSO).

¶18. (S/NF) Ammar is charged with the illicit weapons recovery account, and is already engaged in his own buy-back of all sorts of materiel. On August 23 he told us he recently met with an arms dealer who claimed there are Strela 1, 2 and 3's as well as Stingers for sale on the Yemeni black market. Ammar gave him the funds to purchase them. All MANPADS recovered would become part of our buy-back. (Note: He was not convinced on the Stingers, but promised to inform us immediately if he recovers any. End Note.) Ammar reported that he is also buying back C-4 and explosives detonators from the market.

¶19. (S/NF) Ammar is a frank and direct interlocutor. In private he speaks about his difficulties in dealing with the Ministry of Defense, which he often describes as an impediment. The ROYG envisions the NSB operating as a joint NSC-CIA type organization modeled on the Jordanian GID. Our main CT interlocutor, PSO Chief Gamish, will be the unseen elephant in the room during your discussions with NSB. You can capitalize on this tension -- Ammar needs to succeed in this, his first major assignment.

The Case of the Missing MANPADS

¶10. (S) The ROYG is ready to sell and destroy the 79 systems it currently claims are its only illicit MANPADS stock. Your challenge will be getting the ROYG to provide a serialized inventory of their official MANPADS stock.

¶11. (S) ROYG cooperation rises and falls along a predictable "what have you done for me lately" pattern. After an initial July 2003 inspection, the ROYG rebuffed Embassy requests to inventory ROYG recovered MANPADS stocks. Following delivery of Secretary Powell's letter, offering assistance to buy-back and destroy MANPADS, we were allowed to view current stocks in July 2004. In the latest inspection, Emboffs viewed 79 SA-7's which appeared inoperable, vice 1,100 in the same storage facility in 2003. (Note: You will be touring this facility during your visit. End Note.)

¶12. (S/NF) NSB Ammar Saleh told us on August 18 that the Ministry of Defense re-distributed all usable systems to its own forces. "They bought them, they own them, they can do what they like with them," said Ammar. As for the remaining 79, they will be destroyed as part of the tabled buy-back. He assured us that all U.S. buy-back funds will be handled by his organization and promised complete control of the systems from collection to destruction.

¶13. (S/NF) Ammar has developed his own proposal for storage and control of recovered MANPADS under the U.S. proposal. He has twice raised his idea for a joint USG-NSB effort. "You build the warehouse, I'll buy the land." He wants to use non-Ministry of Defense facilities to prevent acquired illicit MANPADS from becoming "mixed up" with MOD stocks.

Official Inventory Controls

¶14. (S/NF) You can expect Minister of Defense Alaiwa to balk at our request for a serialized account of official MANPADS stocks. Ammar described this information as "Top Secret" and exclaimed "Why would you want to know?" Your

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answer is simple: MANPADS leaked from Yemen's official stock were used in al-Qa'ida operations in Kenya, Saudi Arabia, and Yemen. The ROYG position is that these weapons were smuggled out during the chaos of the 1994 civil war, but that current controls are much better. However, in reality they share our concern and are highly motivated to prevent any recurrence given the damage it could do to the U.S. - Yemeni CT partnership and therefore their growing USG development assistance account. Ammar Saleh has suggested that our

demand for a serialized inventory account would be better received if couched in an offer of technical assistance to modernize and computerize inventories of the Yemeni Armed Forces arsenal.

Continued Acquisition and Destruction of Illicit MANPADS

¶15. (S/NF) Presently, the ROYG uses a list of 29 approved arms dealers to collect illicit weapons from the grey market. MANPADS buy-back will create an additional demand in the local arms market. This is to our advantage if we can destroy additional non-Yemeni systems floating in from HOA. What we want to avoid, however, is a secondary arms market for cheap North Korean MANPADS that cost less to produce than what we are offering to pay for recovered systems. Given that the ROYG has violated its bilateral agreement not to deal with North Korea, we should impress upon them our concerns regarding control of future buy-back acquisitions.

New Acquisitions

¶16. (S/NF) President Saleh will claim the sovereign right to determine Yemen's defense needs. You will want to press Saleh and Alaiwa that the purpose of this buy-back is not to fund illegitimate acquisitions of more advanced MANPADS systems for ROYG forces. (See other channel reporting.)

¶17. (C) The ROYG described initiatives to Senior Advisor Bodine and NSC Deputy Townsend in 2003 to negate all current end-user licenses and increase MFA involvement in the acquisitions process by issuing new certificates through overseas embassies -- there has been no action on this commitment.

Proliferation of SA/LW beyond MANPADS

¶18. (C) Ammar is hoping this buy-back will lead to other SA/LW buy-backs -- which will expand his portfolio. He and the ROYG are motivated for success in the hope that additional buy-backs for SA/LW will follow. This visit is an opportunity to study the greater issue of weapons proliferation in Yemen.

¶19. (C) Yemen has a gun loving culture and has long been a regional center for weapons smuggling. A dhow interdicted by the U.S. Navy in early May with a shipment of 500 AK-47s bound for Somalia underscores the continuing problem. Saleh must balance political support from the northern tribes with the fact that so many of them are heavily involved in weapons smuggling operations.

Grey Arms: Border Control

¶20. (C) Yemen and Saudi Arabia have announced joint efforts to tighten border security, but improvement and application to date is limited and uneven. The security of Yemen's land and maritime borders remains a priority concern. The USG has installed the Pisces system here and just initiated the EXBS program for further assistance. The Yemeni Coast Guard is up and running. Still, tackling the issue remains well beyond Yemen's current border control capacity, particularly along the long and largely unregulated boarder with Saudi Arabia.

The Al-Houthi Factor

¶21. (S/NF) The difficulty of the Yemeni Army and Central Security Forces to end the bloody conflict with the armed supporters of rebel Shi'ite cleric al-Houthi in the northern region of Sa'da is causing some ROYG officials to rethink its traditional hands-off policy on SW/LA flow in and out of Yemen. It appears al-Houthi supporters are better armed with newer weapons than ROYG forces. This thinking presents us with a double-edged sword. We can capitalize on it by pressing for strong cooperation on illicit MANPADS recovery. At the same time, it is likely to feed ongoing ROYG efforts to acquire new, technologically advanced weapons.

KRAJESKI